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The Judgment of
Private Discretion
I N
Matters of Religion
D E F E N D E D;
I N A
S E R M O N

On i *Thessal.* V. 21.

Preached at *St. Pauls Covent-Garden*,
Feb. XXIII. 1686.

By RICHARD KIDDER.

I M P R I M A T U R,
March 19. 1686. *Guil. Needham.*

L O N D O N,

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TO THE
READER.

Nothing concerns us so much as the Salvation of our Souls, and, in order to that, the choice of our Religion. Here it well becomes us to use great care, and strictly to examine things. This we doe in matters of less moment; when we purchase, and when we trade; when we are concerned for our Health, our Estates, and Properties. The H. Scriptures frequently put us upon this care; and the man who is diligent herein will be able to give the best account of himself hereafter, and find the greatest satisfaction here: Such a man will have steady Principles, and have this comfort, that 'tis not by mere chance, but choice, that he is what he is. This is the way to be certain that we are in the right, which no man can be without understanding. We may be confident indeed, but can never be certain, without knowledge and diligent examination of things.

The Church of England does not require a blind Obedience; She is content Her Doctrines should be examined by the clearest light. Simplicity and Truth seek not corners. The H. Scriptures are allowed to the people, and no means of instruction wanting among us. She does not indeed vaunt of what she hath not: She pretends not to any absolute Infallibility. She is modest, and contains Herself within due bounds, and with-holds not from Her Children either the liberty or means of examining Her Doctrines.

To the Reader.

But so it is, that She suffers very greatly in the mean time: Because She claims not Infallibility, there are those who would infer that there is no certainty where the other is not. But this is a wild and extravagant conclusion; for the certainty of a Thing does not depend upon the infallibility of a Person, but ariseth from the evidence or clear grounds which evist its truth. It does not follow that because I am fallible that I can be certain of nothing; or that because I am liable to err, I can never be sure I am in the right; or that because I am ignorant of some things, therefore I know nothing at all.

And yet we find it frequently pretended that Protestants want certainty, and that they build upon an unsure foundation; and that because they claim not that infallibility which others pretend to. The best way to shew the uncertainty of our Faith would be to prove that we build on false grounds; but those men who are most forward to traduce us, have no great inclination to consider with due application the merits of our cause. Instead of this, they would have us rest upon the Authority of their Church, as if the way to be more certain than we are, were for us to see with other mens eyes, and not with our own.

A man might justly expect from these men, who thus declaim against Protestants, that when they attempt to shew the uncertainty of their Faith, they should at least prove the certainty of their own. 'Twill be worth our while to see if they have any better grounds for their Faith, or safer way to Salvation, than we have, who examine our Doctrines by the H. Scriptures. The best way to know this, will be to compare them one with another.

They say that the definition of the Church is our Rule, where, before we can be certain, we must be sure of two things, [1.] That there is an infallible Church. [2.] That their Church is that infallible Church. We on the other hand

To the Reader.

band make the H. Scriptures our Rule, and believe what they teach; and here are two things also of which we must be sure. [1.] That what God says is true. [2.] That what the Scriptures reveal is from God. This is the true state of the question between us. And now let any man consider impartially who builds upon the surest grounds, They who build upon the Veracity of God, and upon the H. Scriptures, which are by all Christians owned to be the declaration of his will; or they who build upon a pretence that there is an infallible Church, and that their own is it. The Principles on which they build are neither so evident in themselves, nor yet so generally owned as ours; for theirs are not so much as owned by the generality of Christians, whereas ours cannot be denied by themselves. And 'twill appear that our way is as Easie, and more Safe than theirs.

'Tis as easie to know what the Scripture teaches as what their Church does: God intended it for the use of the people, and surely then he fitted it for their use. And we have great reason to believe that God can deliver his mind as plainly as a Council, & that he did it in all things necessary to the guidance & salvation of the people for whom he wrote it. This is so very evident, that some of the Church of Rome have owned it. The Authors of the Preface to the Testament printed at Mons declare, That he who in the Scripture seeks nothing but his own Salvation shall find it there. And presently afterwards, speaking of some
obscurity in the Scripture, they add these words: But that which may comfort us in this obscurity is this, that, according to St. Augustin, the H. Scripture does propose to us after an easie and intelligible manner all that is necessary for the conduct of our life; That it does explain and clear it self, in expressing clearly in some places that which in others it expressed obscurely.

For the Doctrine of the Church, 'tis not very easie to know

*Prof. part
1. pag 7.
Celuy qui
ne cherche
dans l'E-
criture,
que son sa-
lut l'y
trouvera.*

To the Reader.

know it. We find at this day several representations of it from those who are all of the Communion of the Roman Church. How shall the simple and unlearned man know what this Doctrine is? His Curate may not be rely'd upon, nor can he be secure from the judgment of any private Doctor. What must he doe? How shall he distinguish between the Doctrine of private Doctors, and that of the Church? Must he read the ancient Canons, and Councils, and Fathers? He'll find this an harder task than the searching of the Scriptures. As our way is as easie, so 'tis

More safe than theirs. There is danger indeed lest our lusts and worldly interests should put a byass upon us, and turn us aside from the Truth, but this lies on both sides: But then on our side the great danger is this, lest we mistake the sense of the H. Scripture; here's the great fear. But then on the other side, they who govern themselves by the authority of the Church are under a double danger; [1.] Lest they take that Church for infallible which is not. [2.] Lest they take that for the Doctrine of this Church which indeed is not her Doctrine. We are sure that the Scriptures are God's Word, and were written for our instruction, and that upon our diligent search into them, and humble addresses to God, we shall find Salvation, if we seek nothing more.

For the infallibility of the Church, which is so much talked of, it must be made good before I can be obliged to receive it; and when 'tis, I shall readily submit to it. But in the mean time I find great difficulties attending upon that Doctrine, both as to the Subject of that Infallibility, as to the Thing it self, and as to the Grounds on which it stands.

As to the Subject of it, I find our Adversaries are not as yet agreed where it is to be placed, and therefore I know not where to find it; and then 'tis all one as if there

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there were no such thing at all. That which I cannot come at will stand me in no stead. Let our Adversaries tell us in whom 'tis lodged: Is it in the Bishop of Rome? Or is it in Him and the Conclave? Or in Him and a General Council? Or is it in a Council without Him? If in a Council, must that be œcumenical only; or does it reside in National and Provincial also?

As to the Infallibility it self, I would be informed how far it reacheth. Does it extend to questions of Fact as well as of Law and Right? Does it take in not only necessary things, but also things that are of less moment? Is this Church infallible not only in her Conclusions, but in the premisses too from whence those Conclusions are drawn? Does this Infallibility require that the question should be examined before the matter be decided or not? Is it a natural gift, or is it by Grace? By immediate Revelation, or not? Let us suppose it in a General Council; yet in this case I would know, whether or not this Council will be infallible in their decisions however things are carried? Are there no Rules the Council is to go by? Must not questions be strictly examined, and the suffrages be free, and the Council be Canonically indited? Or will the Council be infallible tho' it observe none of these rules and forms? Let them tell us what these forms are that are necessary, and let them after this make it appear that they have been duly observed; or let them say if any form or rule be needfull, or not. How comes it to pass that the Divines in a General Council have differed from one another? How comes it that one Council hath determined against another? Why are some of these Councils in part received, and in part rejected? What sure marks have we to distinguish one from another? What assurance can they give that the major part is always the better, and have used the greatest care?

For

To the Reader.

For the Grounds and proofs of this Infallibility I desire to see those that are solid and weighty, such as are evident and clear, and will render me infallibly certain of the thing. This had need be well proved, it not being self-evident. If I must believe the Church in all other things, yet 'tis fit this should be strongly proved. These proofs must be taken from the H. Scriptures, and not from the authority of the Church which lays claim to it. And then they must be such proofs as determine it to that very Church, and as doe evidently prove that such an Infallibility does belong to it as she pretends to.

Till these things are cleared, I know not any better advice I can give the Reader, than to continue stedfast in the Communion of our Church, as the safest way to Heaven. For tho' we ought not to want charity for others, yet we are bound in conscience (and as we will answer it at the great Day) to choose wisely, and to be constant to such a choice. There are some things controverted between Us and the Church of Rome wherein we are manifestly of the safer side: To worship no Image hath no danger, nor is there any hazard in receiving the Sacrament in both kinds. 'Twere easie to give other instances in which we are on the safer side.

In the mean time, let it be our care to live up to our Principles, and we shall not miscarry. The best Church is no security to the careless and the profane. We shall know the Will of God best, when we doe it with great care. 'Tis not enough that we prove all things, we must also hold fast that which is good.

A Sermon

A

SERMON

PREACHED

At Saint Paul's Covent-Garden,
Feb. 23. 1686.

I THESSAL. V. 21.

Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

IN these words the Apostle commends to those, to whom he writes, two things, the one in order to the other.

First, *That they should prove all things.*

Secondly, *That they should hold fast that which is good.*

B

I be-

I begin with the first, *Prove all things.*

And here I think my self obliged before I proceed any farther to consider [1.] The Persons to whom the advice is given; And [2.] The importance of the advice it self.

1. The Persons to whom this advice is given; viz. *to the Church of the Theſſalonians.* Not to the Biſhops and Governors of the Church only, but to the People alſo. This appears from the words (v. 12.) *We beſeech you brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admoniſh you.* It cannot be ſuppoſed that St. Paul does here direct himſelf to the head and not unto the members. He does generally addreſs himſelf to the Church in the moſt diffuſive ſenſe of that word; E. G.

Rom. 1. 7. *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called*
 1 Cor. 1. 2. *to be Saints.* And, *Unto the Church of God*
 2 Cor. 1. 1. *which is at Corinth, to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus called to be Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jeſus Chriſt the Lord.* Again, *Unto the Church of God which is in Corinth, with all the Saints*
 Gal. 1. 2. *which are in all Achaia.* Again, *Unto the Church*

Church of Galatia; And, To the Saints which Eph. i. 1.
are at Ephesus, and to the faithfull in Christ
Jesus. And where the Bishops and other
Ministers of the Church are named the bo-
dy of the faithfull are not forgotten. Thus,
To all the Saints in Christ Jesus which are at Phil. i. 1.
Philippi with the Bishops and Deacons. A- Colos. i. 2.
gain, To the Saints and faithfull brethren in 1 Thes. i.
Christ which are at Colosse. And, To the 2 Thes. i.
Church of the Thessalonians. And thus also 1 Jam. i. 1.
St. James, To the twelve Tribes scattered a-
broad. Thus St. Peter, To the strangers 1 Pet. i. 1.
scattered, &c. And, To them that have ob- 2 Pet. i. 1.
tained like pretious faith with us. And St.
John (as a learned man hath observed) may
well be supposed to direct that Epistle to
the Church, or whole body of Christians,
which according to our version is said to
be directed to the Elect Lady. St. Jude di-
rects his To them that are sanctified by God Jude v. 1.
the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and
called. St. Paul where he gives Laws about
the Officers and Government of the Church
directs his Epistles to the Governours onely
as in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus;

otherwise he directs, as here, to the whole body of Christians.

2. I consider the importance of the advice, *Prove all things*. The Greek word, which we render *Prove*, signifies to examine the truth or goodness of a thing; and to discern the difference between one thing and another. It signifies to try and examine, and sometime (as the result of such tryall) to approve.

Luk. 12.
56. & *cb.*
14. v. 19.
Ro. 2. 18.
1 Cor. 3.
13. 11. 27.
16. 3.

It hath in the New Testament a particular reference to matters of Religion: These things deserve examining, and there are about Religion many dangerous errors which want not the vogue and colour of truth. We are required *to try the Spirits*, and warned *not to believe every Spirit*.

We are required to examine and try the truth and goodness of things, *yea of all things*, and not to take them upon trust: And this precept is subjoined to that, *Despise not prophecyings*; *i. e.* the preaching of the Word, as may be collected from the Apostle's words elsewhere.

1 Cor. 14.
3. 4. 5.

St. Paul doth frequently put us in mind
to

to reverence the Ministers of Religion and tells us how they are to be esteemed ; He requires us in this Chapter *To esteem them* Heb. 13. 17
1 Cor. 4. 1.
2 Cor. 5. 20. *very highly in love for their works sake, (v. 13.)* and bids us *not despise prophecies*, and yet even to this he adds *Prove all things, &c.* whence I raise this Doctrine or Proposition.

That it is the duty of Christian people to examine the grounds of their Religion and Faith, and not to take them upon trust.

For the better speaking to it I shall

First, shew how this Proposition is to be understood.

Secondly, I shall prove the Truth of it.

Thirdly, I shall answer the Objections that may be brought against it.

Fourthly, I shall make some use and application of the whole.

I shall shew how this Proposition is to be understood: And that I shall doe in the following particulars. I.

1. What I plead for is a judgment of *discretion* and not of *jurisdiction* and *direction*, which belongs to our Superiors. 'Tis here

here as in the Laws of a Kingdom. The people are obliged to know and keep them. It is the duty and the interest of every man to know so much of them as concerns his life and property, and the discharging his duty to his Prince and Countrey. But then the power of making these Laws lies in his Prince or Governors ; and the learned in the Law are onely fit to direct and guide men in the matters of doubt and question. And so it is in Religion. It does not belong to every private man to be a preacher and interpreter of Holy Writ, much less hath he any thing to doe to make Laws for other men. But the private man hath a soul to save, and in order thereunto is bound to inform himself in matters of faith, and those things which tend to the regulating his life and conversation. We do not receive the people as judges of Controversies, and doubtfull Disputations; yet think them concerned in Religion in the mean time. For matters of dispute and question the Priests lips are to preserve knowledge. Here it becomes private men to be
modest,

modest, and to preserve a great reverence for their spiritual guides. But there is a great deal of difference between asking the way, when we are at a stand, and pulling out our eyes and leaving our selves wholly to be led by another. We may use our own eyes and our guides too.

2. It is likewise a judgment of *private* discretion which I plead for. It is not fit that a private man should judge for himself and his brother too. His Conscience is not to be the common standard and measure of other mens. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Every man ought to have this liberty to himself and to be content therewith, and not to censure his brother. Ro. 14. 5.

3. The practice of private men must (notwithstanding this liberty) be governed by the laws of their just Superiors. And nothing can excuse them from an active obedience but where their Governors command what God hath forbid, or forbid what he hath commanded.

And this determination of our practice
(especially

(especially in matters of order and discipline, of which I would be chiefly understood) is very consistent with that judgment of discretion which I am now pleading for. Indeed if the thing commanded be evil I must obey God rather than man; but if it be not, I sin against God when I disobey my Superiors. A private man is not judge of what is convenient, most decent and orderly, but ought to judge between good and evil, lawfull and unlawfull, true and false. Our Doctrine does not give men a liberty to doe what they list when it permits them a judgment of discretion; we do not pull out the peoples eyes, nor yet allow them to break hedges and throw open enclosures and ramble wherever they list.

- II. I shall prove the truth of this Proposition and shew that men are not to take their Religion upon trust; That they ought to examine their Religion; To try the Doctrines which they are taught whether true or false, revealed by God or not: And also
to

to consider whether what is enjoined them be lawfull or not. And to this purpose I desire you to consider,

1. That the Scripture teacheth us this Doctrine. We are here commanded to *prove all things*; And our Saviour bids his followers *take heed that no man deceive them.* Matt. 24. 4. c. 23. 10. 1 Pet. 5. *Christ* allows no man a tyranny over the Consciences of men, nor would St. *Peter* have it usurped, nor did the *Apostles* themselves practice it. St. *Paul* declares himself *not to be a Lord over their faith but an helper of their joy.* 2 Cor. 1. 24. Heb. 13. 29. *Christ* is our Master and great *Shepherd.* His Ministers are but *Stewards* and Embassadors, and are no farther imitable than they follow *Christ.* 1 Cor. 11. 1.

Our Saviour calls upon his followers to *beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees,* and to *search the Scriptures.* And we are required *to try the Spirits,* and not to believe an Apostle or an Angel that should preach any other Gospel. Matt. 16. Joh. 5. 39. 1 Joh. 4. 1. Gal. 1.

God gave his law for our direction: And we are assured that the Scripture is sufficient to *render the man of God wise unto*

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salva-

Deut. 4. *salvation through faith in Christ.* And those
 Psal. 1. men are commended who searched the
 2 Tim. 3. Scriptures and examined the Doctrine of
 Luke 16. the primitive Preachers by them.
 Act 17. 11.

Mat. 15. 14 *If the blind lead the blind* (says Christ)
both shall fall into the ditch. Men will not
 be excused because they have been misled
 by their guides, and believed as their Church
 believed. *Ezekiel* tells us that where the
 Ezek. 3. people are not warned they shall dye in
 17, 18. their iniquity. Religion is every man's
 concernment, and every man is obliged to
 take care of his Soul, and not blindly to
 give himself up to him that pretends to be
 an infallible guide.

1 Pet. 3. 15. *Be ready always* (says St. Peter) *to give*
an answer to every man that asketh you a reason
of the hope that is in you. We must then
 judge of the grounds of our Faith and not
 take it upon trust.

2. I shall represent to you (for the better
 confirming my Proposition) the just Ex-
 ceptions against the contrary belief; viz.
 That the people are bound to lay aside their
 own discretion and intirely to give them-
 selves

selves up (without examining) to be led as their guides please. I shall shew the dangerous consequences, the inconsistency and vanity, the impiety and unreasonableness of this principle; and that in the following particulars.

[1.] This principle is of the most dangerous consequence.

It would justify the Idolatry of the *Israelites* which was at any time introduced upon them by their H. Priests or false Prophets or evil Kings. We read of their sacrificing in high places, their worship of the golden Calf, and the Calves of *Dan* and *Bethel*, of their brazen Serpent and their false Gods. It was not a just excuse for them that the golden Calf was made by *Aaron*: They were not without blame for offering upon that Altar, which resembled that which was at *Damascus*, because *Uriah* their H. Priest set it up, and *Ahaz* their King commanded the use of it. But we know that God was angry with them when they followed their blind guides which he would not have been had they done well in it.

This principle would have justified the *Jews* in rejecting our Saviour. For who could blame them for doing that which their H. Priest and Sanhedrim, their Priests and Elders had done before? It is true he wrought many Miracles: But to this they might reply, that their Church did not believe them effected by the power of God. Indeed *Jesus* appeals often to the Scripture; but, according to this principle, to this they might have pleaded that it was not for private men to understand Scripture, and that their Church did understand it otherwise. They might have pleaded moreover that the interpreting of Scripture did not belong to private men as they were, and that they were to be governed by Tradition or the Oral Law, and not by the written one onely; That they had among them an H. Priest and Sanhedrim, Scribes or men learned in the Law and Traditions, which latter they received with equal reverence with the Written Word. *Have any of the Rulers and the Pharisees believed on him?* say they. They were so far from it that

Joh. 7. 43.

that they agreed that he who confessed him to be the *Christ* should be put out of the Joh. 9. Synagogue. Would such pretences, think ye, have served the turn of the *Jews*? By no means. They ought to have read the Scriptures, to which *Jesus* appealed, to have compared events with prophecies. This our Lord puts them upon, and it was Joh. 5. 39. 45; 46; 47. Act. 17. 11. at once their duty and interest to have done it. They are commended who took this course.

This principle might afterwards have justified the *Jews* in their rejecting the Christian doctrine and the Apostles and first Preachers thereof. The *Jews* might have pleaded against the Apostles many things, *e. g.* The undoubted antiquity of the Jewish Church, and novelty of the Christian doctrine: The necessity of giving themselves up to the conduct of their Priests, whose lips were to preserve knowledge, and they were to seek the Law at their mouth: They might have pleaded that they were in the safest way to salvation: for, though they denied the possibility of it to the Christi-
ans,

ans, yet, *Jesus* himself owned that salvation was of the *Jews*. They might have urged the 17th of *Deuteronomy* to prove the infallibility of their Church with a far greater shew than ever *Thou art Peter, &c.* was produced to prove that of the Bishop of *Rome*. It being expressly required (*Deut.* 17. 8, 10.) That in matters of Controversie men should abide by the Sentence of the law pronounced by the Priest, or Judge of that time ; whereas no such thing is said of the Bishop of *Rome* in the New Testament.

This principle would effectually have hindered the propagation of the Christian Religion among the *Gentil* or *Pagan* part of the world. They had their Priests and H. Priests too as well as the *Jews* , they had antiquity to plead, and great success and prosperity under their way of worship. *Sequendi sunt nobis parentes qui feliciter sequuti sunt suos*, saith *Symmachus*. If this principle might be allowed there could be no way left to spread the faith among them.

This one principle where ever admitted would have put a perpetual bar to the conversion

version of *Jews* and *Infidels* to the Christian Faith. For what method can we take to bring them over if we cannot convince them that we are in the *right* and they in the *wrong*? And how can they be made sensible of this if we allow them not the liberty of judging? And sure if they be fit to judge of the whole matter they are not unfit to judge of the severals. If we allow them the liberty to judge of Christianity before they embrace it, it is not reasonable to deny them a judgment of discretion when they are received into the Christian Faith.

This principle admitted would have excused the people that should have continued in *Arianism*, when the Bishops and Priests and generally the whole Church was infected with it. The *Arians* once filled the Church, called themselves Orthodox and Catholicks and others Hereticks. According to this principle the people ought to have continued thus always; for they were to be governed by their Bishops and Priests; And why should they think themselves obliged to hearken to what you had to offer from

from Scripture, or Reason, or the Council of *Nice*, when it was against the sense of the present Church ?

[2.] This principle, not being self-evident, is inconsistent, and manifestly destroys it self. For 'tis liable to be examined, and ought to be strictly examined because very much depends upon it. If it may be examined by the people they who maintain it have lost their question. For then the people are not obliged to despoil themselves of their faculties and wiser powers but may judge in matters of Religion, this being of the most principal concernment of all. This ought not to be taken upon trust because their salvation depends upon it. If this chance to be false they may blindly give themselves up to a guide who may lead them to the regions of darkness.

[3.] Supposing there were any truth in this principle, yet it would be of no use to us unless we were also directed to the Church and guides to whom we are to surrender our selves. Supposing we were bound to believe as the Church believes and blindly.

ly to follow our Priests, yet if we do not know what Church is to be thus trusted, and what Priests thus to be confided in, and under what profession we are to doe it we shall be at as great a loss as ever. For it cannot be supposed that it is the duty of all people, in every Countrey and under every Profession to doe this. For *Jews*, *Christians* and *Infidels* cannot be all under an equal obligation. It is then to be considered to what Church this belongs. If the Church of *Rome* put in she must shew a better plea than any other that may pretend, and a better than any she hath produced as yet. For Antiquity, Succession, Miracles, Amplitude, Prosperity, Success, &c. these are things that may be pleaded in behalf of *Jews*, *Pagans* and *Infidels*. They will at least severally share in these pretences. Let the pretence be what it will, before I can admit the pretender I must judge his title good, and that will destroy the principle.

[4.] This principle invades the prerogative of God, and usurps upon his peculiar. He onely hath a direct dominion over the

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Jam. 4. 12. Consciences of men. *He is the one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy.* We are obliged to believe a verity because he saith it. There must be a revelation before a divine faith. Men have not power to make articles of faith, or to require our assent upon presumption of such power.

[5.] Many things in Religion are so plain that a man of ordinary capacity and competently instructed in the principles of Religion is able to judge of them : But this principle destroys that power, and supposeth men unable to judge in the plainest cases whatsoever.

From the Writers of the *Romish* Church we hear much of the obscurity of the Scriptures. I grant that there are some things in them hard to be understood, and every man therefore is not fit to interpret them. God hath appointed an order of men to doe this. He hath given some *Apostles*, some *Prophets*, *Evangelists*, *Pastors* and *Teachers*, not to hoodwink the people and lead them out of the way, but for the *perfecting of the Saints*, and for the *edifying of the body*
of

of *Christ*, and preserving the people from the *sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive*. This is the great purpose of the institution. 'Tis for the instruction and building up of the faithfull.

But our way is generally plain, and there we need no guide if we use our eyes, and mind our rule. Matters of *faith* as well as *manners* are plainly revealed.

Such are all the Articles of our most ancient Creed : They are so plainly taught in the H. Scriptures that he who runs may reade them there.

That we love God and our Neighbour are the weightier things of. Religion, and easie to be understood : Justice and Mercy and Peaceableness are plain. That we obey the King, be charitable to the poor, just to all men, and doe as we would be done by : That we use no craft or equivocations, but be sincere in all our actions and professions, are things not hard to be understood.

But if men should undertake to be guides to the people, and teach them rebellion, in-

justice, cruelty, dissembling and equivocation; to kill their King and destroy their enemies; a man of mean understanding may discern that these are not the gifts which *Christ* gave unto men, but that they are a company of false people, or rather ravenous wolves. To judge of these things no man needs a guide who hath eyes in his head.

III. I shall now answer the Objections which may be brought against what I have said.

Obj. I. 'Tis pretended that this Doctrine will introduce Heresies and Schisms into the Church. And we are upbraided with Schisms and Heresies as the effect of our Doctrine. On the other hand that the people, who confide in their Pastors, and believe as the Church believes, are kept in unity and at peace. To this I answer

Ans. I. 'Tis a fond thing to imagine that there shall be no Heresies or Schisms, and that we have found a way to prevent them. This is like the boast of a Mountebank who pretends to a *Panacea* or universal remedy for

for all diseases, who gains small credit — with wise men. I grant that Heresies and Schisms are great evils, and that we ought to prevent them what we can. And much might be done towards it if the Ministers of Religion could as easily secure the practice as inform the minds of men. But *Scandals* or *Offences* are great evils as well as *Heresies*: And yet *Christ* tells us that *it must needs be that offences come*; And *St. Paul* tells us as plainly, *There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*. God hath foretold that there should come a *falling away*, and that some should be under *strong delusions and believe a lye*. It is a vain thing to pretend a remedy against that evil against which God himself hath provided none.

2. To believe without examining, as the present Church believes, is so far from preventing Heresies that it secures men under them without any hope of emerging. A blind obedience may as well detain men in Heresie as keep them in the Faith. This principle shuts men up, and is so far from pre-

preventing the disease, that whenever men are overtaken with it all that it does is that it hinders all remedy.

3. That the principle which I have exposed, being not self-evident but contestable, may well be supposed to divide men about the main question. It ought to be examined because it does not carry its Evidence along with it. And then who can tell but that the principle which is devised to unite may chance to divide men when they go about to examine it?

4. We will suppose this principle self-evident, and that it hath been anciently and universally received (which is by no means to be granted) yet we know that it was not effectual. The *Gnosticks*, *Arians* and other Hereticks did infest the Primitive Church. This principle then was received in the Church from the beginning or it was not : If it were not, it is then a new Doctrine, and we are not obliged to receive it now. If it were received in the ancient Church, I would then know how Heresies and Schisms got into the Church? Was
this

this principle then ineffectual and shall it not now fail to be effectual ?

This Doctrine which I maintain, it may *Obj. 2.* be objected, will destroy that reverence which is due from the people to their Pastors, and make them their Judges.

1. There is a great honour due from the People to their Pastors. This cannot be denied. They are bound to pay it by all instances of regard and kindness. *He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet's reward.* *Ans^w.* 1 The^{ss}. 5. 13. He. 13. 17. 1 Cor. 9. 11. 2 Tim. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 6. Matt. 10. 4.

2. This honour hath its bounds and measures. It is due for the sake of their Master and their Work, and in proportion to their faithfulness and labours. *Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* But we need not put out our eyes that they may lead us whither they please; nor are bound to pay that honour to the Servants and Stewards which is onely due to their Lord and Master. 1 Tim. 5. 17.

3. That we may give them all due honour though we do not think them infallible.

libe. This the Apostle supposeth in my Text. For though he had required this esteem from the people towards their Pastors (v. 13.) yet he commands them to *prove all things*. We are obliged to honour our Judges and Civil Magistrates, and may truly doe it though we do not believe every sentence and determination of theirs to be according to exact truth and equity.

For our Judges in civil matters we are obliged to sit down by their sentence, when we do not think it just; we are to suffer wrong and not resist. It does not hence follow that we must follow our spiritual guides without examining. The Civil Magistrate determines onely our outward actions, or disposeth of some of our goods and properties (which we have power to alienate) but he does not prescribe upon our inward sense, nor touch upon our Conscience as our spiritual guides do in their commands. And though we do not appeal from the Civil Magistrate, it cannot hence be inferred that we think him infallible.

But

possibility of sinning as well as of erring, and yet we know God hath made no such provision. An infallible *guide* of *manners* is as necessary as such a *guide* of *controversies*, and yet we cannot say there is any such. And then we have no cause to make such a conclusion.

2. That supposing it necessary there should be an Infallible Judge, yet this would doe us no good unless we could be infallibly sure of this Infallible Judge. And there are two things in this case we must be infallibly certain of, *viz.* [1.] That there is some Infallible Judge: [2.] Who that Judge is. Both these are necessary. We must be sure of a treasure first, and then know where it lies before we can have cause to boast of our wealth.

3. That supposing the present Church of *Rome* were the infallible Church, yet the more simple sort of people would not be, for all this, at any greater certainty. For they would have another task upon them, *viz.* to inquire what is the faith and what is the worship of this Church. And how will they doe to find that out? must they be ruled by what the ignorant and common people

people doe ? Perhaps the Church does not allow of all their practices. Or shall they be governed by their Parish Priest ? But that Priest for what they know may err, though a Pope or Council cannot. Shall they be governed by common consent ? But there are differing customs and usages in *France* and *Spain* and other Countries, to which of these shall they adhere ? Must they be taught by a Pope *ex cathedra* ? But how shall they know if this be a true Pope, or whether he speak *ex cathedra* or not ? Or will you send these people to the Council of *Trent* ? Alas, 'tis a thing well known that the words of that Councils Decrees are sometime general and ambiguous and not fit to direct plain and simple people. And yet Pope *Pius IV.* commanded that without his authority no man should explain them. That no man should presume *Ullos commentarios, glossas, annotationes, Scholia, ullumve omnino interpretationis genus super ipsius Concilii decretis quocunque modo edere.* That is, By any way to publish any Commentaries, Glosses, Annotations, Scholia, or any sort of interpretation whatsoever upon the Decrees of that Council.

And this under the pain of Excommunication, as appears by his Bull for the confirmation of that Council. For instance : That Council tells us that Images are to be had in Churches, and to have due honour given them. What this due honour is which they allow how shall the simple man know ? Whether it be negative or positive honour ? Whether he give too much or too little ? Whether he divide it aright between the Image and the Prototype ? How can he know how to govern himself in this affair ? Indeed the Council says afterwards that *all Superstition must be avoided*. But what the Superstition is which the Council disallows it does not define. And therefore the plain and simple man will be at a loss how to govern himself.

IV. I shall now make some application of what hath been said.

1. This serves for the reproof of those who would deprive the people of that liberty which God hath given them. This is to despoil them of the great prerogative of their nature, and degrade them into a lower rank.

rank of being, which is the greatest tyranny imaginable. There is nothing so much concerns mankind as Religion and the interest of their immortal Souls. We are here put upon trying or proving all things. *Believe not every spirit* (says St. John) *but try the spirits whether they are of God.* *Christ bids the Jews search the Scriptures.* Surely then the Scriptures are not to be kept from the people: And they must be allowed their rule when they are obliged to prove all things. If they are obliged to give a reason of their hope they must be allowed to examine its grounds.

2. This serves for the reproof of those among our selves who do not use that liberty of examining which is allowed them; who neither know nor will understand: That are crafty and diligent in worldly affairs but supinely negligent in their truest and greatest interest. Too many are wedded to their faction and fond opinions, and both practice and prescribe that which they condemn in the Ch. of *Rome*. Did they ingenuously examine things, and sincerely seek the truth, they might easily avoid the Errors & Schisms they are now justly charged with.

3. Let

3. Let us then examine the grounds of our faith, especially in the points controverted among us at this time, then will your Communion with the Ch. of *England* not be the result of *Chance*, but of *Judgment*, and of choice. I know no mark of a true Church wanting here, and am sure that many things greatly commend to us her Communion.

First, This Church does not void the necessity of an holy life. It cancels none of our obligations to God or man ; but teacheth the absolute necessity of contrition and repentance, and mortification of our lusts. And does by no means indulge a liberty of living as we list.

Secondly, She fairly proposeth her Doctrines, and does not refuse to have them examined, nor deprive her Children of the means of doing it by the clearest light.

Thirdly, Nor are her Doctrines fitted to advance a secular interest or glory. Religion is an holy institution ; heavenly in its principle and pure in its aim, and disdains to stoop to mean arts for wealth and worldly dignities.

Fourthly, This Church teacheth nothing that is manifestly false, nor puts us upon
any

any practice which is a direct violation of any divine institution.

Fifthly, Nor does this Church want the excellent badge of charity, which is indeed the bond of perfectness. Religion was designed as the greatest blessing to mankind, and the author of the Christian was a great lover of humane race. Its precepts are full of kindness and benignity, and commend the highest pitch of civility and compassion, and the highest flights of friendship.

Sixthly, As obedience to Kings and Governors is a great part of the Christian Religion, and an ornament to it, and was in an eminent degree practised by the first and best Christians, so it is the doctrine of our Church, and hath always been the practice of the members of it. >

In a word, we pray for our enemies, and teach men to give both God and *Cæsar* their due. We think it safe to worship no Image, and are sure we are right when we pray to God through the mediation of *Jesus Christ*. We know that God hears, but cannot say so of Saints and Angels. We receive the Sacrament

ment in both kinds as given by *Christ*, and received by the ancient Church: And do believe the Sacramental bread after consecration to be what the Apostle calls it more than once. For the Doctrine of Concomitance we leave it to them who understand it. We pray in a tongue we understand. We follow the H. Scriptures, believe the ancient Creeds, nor do we reject the first general Councils. We press men to piety, loyalty, humility and charity, and earnestly desire the salvation of mankind. We press men to all manner of good works, but place our hope in the mercy of God and merits of his Son. If we live up to our rule we are safe; If not, 'tis not the fault of our Religion, 'tis our own. If we live up to our Religion we shall never be miserable in this world, and in the next shall be unspeakably happy. *Which God of his mercy grant for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and H. Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.